

# United Bicycle Institute

By Edwin Battistella

Ashland's United Bicycle Institute (UBI) is the largest trainer of certified bicycle mechanics in the United States and the only school in the world that teaches bicycle-frame building. Serving both enthusiasts and professionals, UBI has more than fifty classes annually, from basic repair to advanced mechanics, shop operation, and bicycle building. The seven-member faculty offers a Certified Bicycle Technician program, a Suspension Technician Certification and, in conjunction with manufacturer DT Swiss, an Advanced Wheel Building Certification. UBI also teaches bicycle maintenance courses for women and is approved by the Oregon Department of Education for veterans training and for vocational rehabilitation.

Founded in 1981 by bicycle entrepreneur Wayne Martin, who established the United Bicycle Tool Supply in 1975, UBI has been owned since 1986 by Ronald and Denise Sutphin. Since opening, UBI has trained more than 8,000 students. About two-thirds are either in or entering the bicycle industry, and the remaining third are hobbyists and enthusiasts. Annual enrollment has grown from 58 students in 1985 to 600 in 2007, with students coming from every state and over forty countries.

UBI is a green business, with an 8.4 kilowatt solar photovoltaic system providing much of the school's electricity. In 2007, the school was recognized for innovation by Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc.

Ashland provides a supportive environment since it is also home to United Bicycle Tool Supply and United Bicycle Parts, providers of industry-standard tools, components, and technical manuals. And such bike routes as the 28.5-mile Ashland loop and the 24.4-mile Lower Rogue River Trail provide bike enthusiasts with opportunities for exploration.

## Sources

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